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243 When a crop has been harvested, the village chief and elders [361] choose the ground to be cut over the following year. Each village 787 has its well-recognized farming areas, beyond which are the lands of the neighboring village. Each member of the communtiy then 423 picks out his particular plot for cultivating, takes home a lump of the earth, puts it under his pillow, and sleeps on it. If he has an auspicious dream, he consults the chicken bones for a confirmation of the good omen. Securing this confirmation, he regards his choice as fixed. Otherwise, he selects another plot and repeats the ceremonies. Once his selection is approved by the auspices, the spot is called a "du la," and he clears a little space on the land, after which he addresses the spirits as follows:

[539]

> "Depart all you evil spirits ('ta we ta na').
> We are going to work here for our food,
> To get sustenance for our wife and children.
> Let no sickness come upon us.
> We are going to work until it is finished."

Next he places a lump of soil on the clearing and, having wrapped the chicken bones in the leaf of a creeper ("ki ku"), he touches the lump with them, raises them towards the sky, and again touches or strikes the clod with the mystic bones. He now breaks these apart and scrapes them until he can insert splints of bamboo into the holes of the bones. If this act of divination is also successful, he is ready for work.

241 In the early days, when much of the primeval forest was still 243 standing, the Karen would clear out the brush and bamboos from among the giant trees on the hillside they were preparing to cultivate. Then they raised platforms at the foot of the trees from which they could cut them above the broad-spreading buttresses at their base, leaving enough of the trunk intact to keep them from falling. When the whole hillside tract had been cut over in this manner, they felled the uppermost tree so as to crash down on those just below, and these in turn would bring down others until

officers, who should become familiar with the Karen people and language, should develop a plan in accordance with which these tribes might be given reservations of land in exchange for the valuable areas now under their control. These reservations might be either in the hills or on the plains, but the Karens should be taught to cultivate them according to approved methods, in order to gain an ample livelihood. Old racial animosities and the temptation for one people to exploit another militate against entrusting such a policy to Burman officials. It ought to be placed only in the hands of earnest, straightforward Government officials, who have gained the confidence of the Karen and are able to deal with them sympathetically but firmly. This general program would doubtless involve some outlay in supplying cattle, not to speak of competent instruction in modern agricultural methods, animal husbandry, etc.

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But these forms of wealth brought with them only more or less prestige within the single stratum comprising the entire community.

There was little occasion for individual initiative among the Karen, on account of the important part played by communal activity amongst them. One could claim no particular credit for his deeds of blood on a raid. That belonged rather to the organizer and leader of the foray. One never set out on a journey or attempted any special work alone. In some sections it was the custom for the chief to beat a gong or blow a horn as the signal to go to the fields. Every one went at the signal. None would go without it. If a supply of fish was wanted, instead of an individual taking his or her rod and going alone to catch them, the whole village, or as many of its members as were free to do so, would join in a fishing expedition, first gathering the herbs to poison the water if the fish were to be taken in that way, or carrying along their funnel-shaped baskets with which to work the bottom of a shallow stream, or going prepared to resort to whatever other method they thought suitable to the time and place. Likewise hunting was commonly conducted as a drive for game in which all might participate, at least all the men; and a motley variety of implements was brought out for the purpose, including nets, crossbows, spears, knives, and perhaps an old rusty gun. Thus they hunted and fished together, as they often do still. Even those who failed to go were not left out in the division of the spoils, if they managed to be present at the proper time, and they usually did.

This communal sharing was so much the order of the day that personal rights were more or less disregarded. If a man got a few seeds and planted a garden near his house, he was fortunate, as is sometimes still the case in the hills, if he gathered half the crop he had planted. His neighbors, asking no leave, helped themselves generously without hesitation and perhaps without intending to steal.

While one's personal rights were thus disregarded, they were not entirely ignored. A man's field or "hkū" and his betel gardens were his own; and his paddy-bins, which may have been built in the jungle a mile from the village, were respected. If he marked with a bunch of grass a tree in which he had discovered a hive of wild bees, no one would attempt to rob it of its honey. Many of the Karen people are like children in their regard for the rights of other persons: they understand and abide by the law of established

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usage, but they are somewhat puzzled by new situations and in such cases are apt to give themselves the benefit of the doubt. Stealing, such as appropriating paddy from a bin or leading off another's ox or taking somebody's money, is severely dealt with among the Karen. But carrying away a small trinket that takes the eye, either with or without the owner's permission, is not considered important enough to be noticed.

THE WOMEN

Among races less advanced than the Karen the attention of the men is almost entirely taken up with warfare and hunting, while the work about the house and village is left to the women. The Karen have not progressed far enough beyond primitive conditions for the men to assume all the burdens of the home life that properly fall to the stronger sex. The men still feel their superiority and remain idle, while the women do work too heavy for them. Even apart from the care of the children, the women bear the heavy end of the burden. They are, to be sure, accepted as necessary and useful members of the family, but, none the less, the men consider themselves dishonored if brought into close contact with a woman's garment or compelled to appear in any way subordinate to a female. They will not, or would not in the olden days, go under a house, lest they should have to pass under a woman. In this respect they entertain feelings similar to those of Burmese men.

As housekeeper the Karen woman's work is by no means confined within the irregular partitions of her living-room or house. She draws the water, which means in the hills that she must descend to the stream and carry up the family supply in bamboo joints hung by strings across her head. She has been trained to do this from the time she was so small that she could only struggle up the hillside with one undersized bamboo at her side. Usually she has her little girls' help in this daily task. (See p. 140.) She must pound and winnow the paddy, polish it in a mortar, wash it, and prepare the meals. Either she brings in fagots of wood and splits it, or the young women fetch bundles of dry bamboo upon their heads and stack them near the ladder of the house. (See p. 132.) She is as skilled in the use of the "dah" (long knife) as her husband. When the meal is cooked she sets it out, if she follows the old custom, on a wide wooden tray or, if she has adopted new ways,